

Sinclair Broadcasting's forcing their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a use of the public airwaves to make a political contribution to the Bush-Cheney campaign. This "documentary" is NOT "news," as I heard a Sinclair corporation spokesperson suggest, and to air it, AND TO REQUIRE ALL THEIR STATIONS TO PREEMPT REGULAR PROGRAMMING TO AIR IT, during the last days before the presidential election makes this even clearer.

The FCC's duty is to the public interest. The recent changes in the campaign finance law make it clear that the public interest is not served by last minute charges, supported by massive advertising of those same charges. It is easy to illustrate the mirror image, against Bush: imagine George Soros had bought up all the Sinclair-owned stations, and required them to show Fahrenheit 911 in the week before the election. This kind of action is clearly a political contribution, and should be subject to political campaign laws.

We have freedom of speech and freedom of the press, but Sinclair's ability to use those freedoms is limited by law, and the FCC has the duty to implement that law. The public has an interest in this election, and they have the right to expect the law regarding political campaign contributions to be followed. I have to say that when I heard on the news that the FCC was not going to do anything about Sinclair's action, my reaction was that the Bush campaign has again proved that they can get whatever they want, because they own everybody, including the FCC. I hope that the FCC proves that initial reaction wrong.

You should also be aware that KGAN, the Cedar Rapids, Iowa station owned by Sinclair, regularly transmits anti-Kerry and pro-Bush segments from one of their staff. They have stated publicly that no one has ever objected to that. In my cursory review of the Cedar Rapids Gazette letters to the editor, however, I have seen at least two letters from individuals stating that they have complained to KGAN. Yet KGAN states no one has complained. I can only imagine how many others have complained who did not have the time or inclination to write a letter to the editor.

I request that the FCC implement the law, and take the public interest seriously. This IS a campaign contribution, and the FCC should treat it as one.

Lillian Lyons Davis